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THE SMALL FOLK'S POSTBAG.

THERE is no sweeter greeting than a letter from a little child, a genuine juvenile letter, unprompted and uncorrected; full of mistakes, perhaps, but full also of simplicity—the very fragrance of childhood. Unfortunately, few such letters add their light weight to the load of Her Majesty's postmen; seldom the weak unsteady writing of small hands comes to any of our doors demanding quick entrance by the loud official knock. It is surely one of the big busy world's mistakes, that the small folks send so few genuine letters and get so few; they and the postbag are strangers—comparatively.

But in carrying other people's letters, they have a very intimate acquaintance with the post-office. Have we not seen a living Tower of Babel, built of ragged little ones, swaying about near the pillar-box, while the top hand aimed a letter at the slit? The poorer children always carry the family correspondence, in one or two journeys a month, to the office or pillar; but the little people who know more about pothooks and hangers, and have more materials at hand, have far less to do in any way with letters. Boys and girls at boarding-schools certainly do write home; but the letters seldom can be called their own. They are not, indeed, tutored by the Complete Letter Writers, which recommended to former generations a pattern letter from an accomplished young prig at school to an awful personage at home—a Paterfamilias of formal tastes and awe-inspiring character. Tom has not to grapple with a book of pattern epistles in the letter-writing hour at his school-room desk; but he is chilled by the knowledge that Mr M'Quilter presiding yonder, will supply him gratis with punctuation by-and-by; and when the whole pile of letters is finished on the master's desk, and Tom recognises his own by that sputter in the top corner, he will watch during five agonised minutes, reading his letter anew in the facial contractions of M'Quilter, the hums and haws and lurking smiles; and Tom will have guarded beforehand that those irritating

smiles shall be few, and that there shall be no reckless vent given to comicality, lest it might be gravely read aloud as a warning example of the absurd.

Poor Tom! he had sufficient warning in that way once. Did not M'Quilter read out a certain unlucky letter—hurriedly written, honestly desirous of telling news at home, but somewhat confused by flowing freedom, innocent of punctuation?—that letter in which Tom wrote a summary of events: the death of Bess the mare; the visit of the Colonel, and the jolly good 'tip' he gave before leaving; the surprise of the boys that the old horse went off so suddenly; the coming 'exam.'—its toughness and hard cramming; the decease, through over-feeding, of the guinea-pigs that he hoped Kitty would have from him at Christmas, and like them; and the alarming news, that a bad attack of gout and the mange were shared in some indistinct manner between Old Pluto and Dr Smithers. Alas! poor Tom, the Tommishness has departed out of his letters since then, under the too keen consciousness of the future spectacles and pencil, and cold judgment by the rules of art. His letter now might belong to that staid and studious Jenkins, or to anybody else; and he is even censured for the sputter on the corner, till he cuts a hole in it with his scraping penknife, and then is detected in having imprinted upon it that human seal, of which it is said no two can be alike—the imprint of the thumb; and finally he copies his letter all over again, less Tommish than ever, but a credit to the school of Smithers.

Tom's sister is at the College for Young Ladies, one of the fashionable 'gardens of girls,' where young ladies of ten and eleven begin their college life, and walk out two and two—'schools' in general being somewhat behind the age now, and beneath the level of learning for 'exams.' and 'matrics.' Tom's sister writes her weekly letter too, wins the golden opinion of Miss Straitlace, and is even amongst the advanced pupils, who are rewarded for their trustworthy conduct, and still more for their sound judgment about straight lines and

commas, by being allowed to despatch letters to their parents without any supervision. But the advanced pupils put in their letters nothing that they would have omitted if the letters were addressed to 'Dear Mamma and Everybody Else.' Little Miss Ethel takes by nature more pleasure in a careful letter than Tom ever would. Ethel has the feminine instinct of neatness and grace. If Matilda-Jane, diving under the table after a pen, jerks her elbow—especially when the letter has progressed faultlessly over that second page that was not so nice to write on—a fearful scene of recrimination ensues; and Ethel will quarrel and weep over a blot, such as Tom, by the licking and swallowing process, would change in a moment into a faint purple moon in a damp atmosphere. If no accidents occur, Ethel's letter is a triumph of the Straitlace teaching. It is evenly written in even lines from 'My dear Mamma' down to 'Your affectionate daughter.' Miss Straitlace approves of 'affectionate daughters,' as more elegant than 'loving children'—what Mamma thinks is another thing; but Ethel knows that especially in correspondence elegance and style are to rule supreme, if she hopes to write in after-life 'a lady's letter.'

Ethel's epistle studiously shows the 'lady's letter' characteristics—except the precious postscript. Miss Straitlace is known to consider postscripts the mark of a mind wanting in order and method, particularly if they have not 'P.S.' prefixed, and properly punctuated. Ethel knows all about punctuation; her commas are like a cruel scattering of her own fair little eyelashes. She knows all about grammar, and succeeds in not writing a single sentence as she would have spoken it. She knows all about the dignity of letter-writing; and there is nothing frivolous about this epistle, written in the finest succession of points, with a confusing family likeness between the 'ns' and the 'us,' and the most scrupulous regard to crossings, dots, and elegant tails. Shut it up, Ethel, fold it mathematically straight, and direct it with practised confidence that the envelope is not upside-down! You are proficient in the *writing* of a school letter; but no one has cared to teach you what the letter itself should be.

Neat and legible letters, of course, the little ones should be taught to write; because legibility—the distinct forming of every word—is a better quality than any mere uniformity or prettiness of writing, and because an ugly careless letter is almost a slight to the person who is to read it. But before all else, it should be impressed upon young letter-writers that they are to write down exactly what they would like to say; that the letter that reads like talk is the best letter; and the formal one that never would have been spoken is the worst. When the children learn to speak faultlessly, and pick up in time the conversational habit of orderly sequence of ideas, their letters will naturally become perfect in wording and arrangement, but will still be a faithful transmission of the *viva-voce* speech of the writers. If this common-sense principle of teaching letter-writing were introduced, there would be a new and immense pleasure added to the life of all child-loving old folks; at some time or other, the children would find need of sending letters; and the prattle of the little ones, their fresh talk

breathing happy ignorance of all but their little world, where small cares, joys, and interests stand around them magnified—the very sound of their voices echoing out of the words they might have said—all this could be kept indelible and ever fresh; and in how many cases of distance, time, or sorrow, the old letters would become precious as gold!

It would also remove from children's minds much of the difficulty of learning to write letters. If the boys and girls are still too young to go to Dr Smithers' or Miss Straitlace's, a letter even to their loving and beloved Uncle John, is a labour approached with dread. They are shown where to begin, and after choosing a commonplace beginning about the pleasure of writing (!), or the safe receipt of the last letter, they beg to be 'set going just down the first page,' or to be told something to say. The beginning was easy; it was as fixed as a chess-opening; but facing three and a half blank pages, the brain-ransacking of the children is pitiful—and the pen-chewing, and the jealousy of the one that has first found something to say, and is going ahead. At last, they all 'go ahead,' and get their sheets turned inside-out for page two; during which process six-year-old Baby, who has been printing in pencil, questioned by Jack, reports about her sneezy cold, the picnic to-morrow, the pigeons, Tabby's kittens, the settlement of the monkey's name as Pongo, and Mab learning music. And Jack bursts out in a fury, that he has written every bit the same thing, only beginning with the picnic, and ending with the kittens and the cold; while Mab, with equal resentment towards both, as if they were marauders in possession of her exclusive property, complains: 'That's the very thing I've got—my music, and the picnic and Pongo, and all the rest of it down to Baby's cold! Uncle can't read the same thing over three times, you stupid Jack! Baby, begin again with something else to say.' Then, probably, some peacemaker interposes, issues new writing-paper, and divides the universal topics into three separate lists: Baby is to keep her own 'sneezy cold and the kittens,' and Mab her own music and the pigeons, and the picnic; Jack may have the picnic too, and Pongo; but they are all to say a great deal more about the items of news. After this there is peace, until they become stranded again, and don't know what to put next.

The whole letter, which Uncle John will receive as a spontaneous greeting, written 'with great pleasure,' is in reality a dreary, prolonged effort; and yet, if Uncle John were there, Mab, Jack, and Baby would hug him to pieces with genuine welcome, and make his head ache with three lively versions of information, all given irrepressibly and at once. Do let the peacemaker that hit on the plan of dividing the news fairly, explain to the children that they are to send their hugging welcome in words freely to weary, work-tired Uncle John, and that they are then just to think what they would say if they were talking, and say it that minute in the first words that come. This, and this alone, is teaching children to write the letters that are worth getting. The handwriting, the spelling, the neatness of the whole, are only the externals, important in their way, but not so important as the substance, the soul of the letter. As other teaching progresses, the writing and the spelling

will come right; but children's letters will not be a pleasure to the senders and the receivers, until the first lessons in letter-writing are the unfettering of child-nature, rather than the fettering of it by art and rule.

But when they write letters, children expect to be answered. Writing letters to little ones is like speaking to them; it is one of the arts the heart teaches. And though we write to them without the inspiration of seeing their bright expressive faces, we have another inspiration in knowing that a letter is a rare delight to a child; it is read over time after time; it is laid by and kept, if it has come from a loving hand.

It is remarkable that some of the most learned and brilliant minds have left, among their weighty and witty published correspondence, the most charming letters to children. Charles Dickens took the trouble to write a long tissue of jokes to a boy who wrote to him about the justice that ought to be done to the good and bad characters in *Nicholas Nickleby*. Sydney Smith, on getting a letter over-weight from a grandchild, sent an answer beginning: 'Oh, you little wretch! your letter cost me fourpence,' and promising that he would pull all the plums out of her puddings, steal her dolls' clothes, give her no currant jelly with her rice, and kiss her till she could not see out of her eyes. Another time, when he was writing to a boy who was recovering from illness, he put an element of boyish interest into his congratulations, by saying that the surgeon was skilful, and he would soon be well; and adding, that in the Trojan War the Greek surgeons used cheese and wine for their ointments, and in Henry VIII.'s time cobbler's wax and rust of iron were used—'so you see it is some advantage to live in Berkeley Square in the year 1837.' Again, he found something pleasant to write to a little friend who was going away to Boulogne: 'Lucy, dear child, mind your arithmetic. You know, in the first sum of yours I ever saw, there was a mistake. You carried two (as a cab is licensed to do), and you ought, dear Lucy, to have carried but one. Is this a trifle? What would life be without arithmetic, but a scene of horrors? You are going to Boulogne, the city of debts, peopled by men who never understood arithmetic.' But the prettiest part of this letter is its beginning, where he advises Lucy not to tear her frock any more, but to be like her mother, 'frank, loyal, affectionate, simple, honest; and then integrity or laceration of frock is of little import.'

One of the best letter-writers that ever covered paper with talk, was Jeffrey of the *Edinburgh Review*; and his correspondence contains gems of letter-writing to his grandchildren, those 'imps of the third generation,' whom he called the light of his eyes, and the love of his heart. We shall close our plea for a better kind of attention to the small folk's postbag, by giving an example of one of his delightful letters, written from his charming summer retreat of Craigcrook, near Edinburgh: 'MY SONCY NANCY!—I love you very much, and think very often of your dimples and your pipples, and your funny little plays, and all your pretty ways; and I send you my blessing, and I wish I were kissing your sweet rosy lips, or your fat finger tips; and that you were near, so that I could hear, your stammering

words, from a mouthful of curds, and a great purple tongue (as broad as it's long); and see your round eyes, open wide with surprise, and your wondering look, to find yourself at Craigcrook! To-morrow is Maggie's birthday.' Then he tells about the bonfire and the merry-making that is to be; about the garden full of flowers; Frankie's new wheelbarrow, with which he does a great deal of work, and some mischief now and then; the good health of all the dogs—Foxy, Froggy, Neddy, Jacky, and Dover, and their present separate appropriation by himself, Tarley (little Charlotte), Frankie, and Granny. Next he sends the donkey's compliments, and hints that the donkey believes he is sending them to a near relation. 'Frankie,' who is described as hammering in the corner to flatten the carpet, is reported to be 'very good and really too pretty for a boy, though I think his two eyebrows are growing into one—stretching and meeting each other above his nose! But he has not near so many freckles as Tarley—who has a very fine crop of them—which she and I encourage as much as we can. I hope you and Maggie will lay in a stock of them, as I think no little girl can be pretty without them in summer.' So the letter winds on, past the pea-hens who are suspected of laying somewhere in secret; the papacook who pretends to know nothing about them, and does not care a farthing; the slow kitchen-garden; and the hope that the grandchild will come to Craigcrook with a lapful of green peas—until at last the 'loving Grandpa' comes to the end of his sheet, with 'Bless you ever and ever, my dear dimply Pussy.'

Does not this letter descend most winningly to the level of the young eyes it was meant for? Soncy Nancy! How applicable, doubtless, to his little Scottish grandchild, Dimply Pussy, a woman grown; perhaps lived to be a grandma, with dimply pussies of her own to love. Are not its home-pictures bright with nature, with life, love, and innocence? And may not a letter to a child be a thing worth doing well?

VALENTINE STRANGE.

A STORY OF THE PRIMROSE WAY.

CHAPTER III.—'I LIKE THE PRIMROSE WAY,' SAID STRANGE.

AFTER breakfast next morning, Strange and his guests were enjoying the day's first cigar.

'I want you two men to come home with me, and let me introduce you to my governor and my sister,' said Reginald Jolly.

This invitation jumped with Gerard's desires, and his cheek coloured with pleasure, unmarked by his companions. 'What do you say, Val?' he asked with as great an assumption of indifference as he could wear.

'I'm very sorry,' said Strange; 'but I can't come.—I didn't tell you of my last bargain, did I, Lumby?'

'No. What is it?'

'I've bought a yacht, a beautiful thing, that sails I don't know how many knots an hour; and I'm going to sail round the world in her "from China to Peru." What do you say to coming along, eh?'

'Val's a noble sailor,' said Reginald. 'To my personal knowledge, he has crossed the British Channel several times; and I believe, but I'm not quite certain, that he has been to the Isle of Man.'

'Ireland, you depreciatory ruffian! Rotterdam! Antwerp! Lots of places!'

'Yes,' said Reginald; 'you're a mighty sea-man.'

'Ah, well,' said Strange; 'I'm a better sailor than you are.'

'I don't believe it,' the little man returned. 'You suffered more than I did, when we crossed to Calais together last summer.'

'Well,' said Strange, reclining luxuriously in an arm-chair and puffing a cloud of smoke towards the ceiling, 'I like to face a difficulty. I like to battle with something that gets me down and rolls upon me, to begin with. The sea has always beaten me until now, and I'm resolved to become an accomplished seaman.'

'He'll provision himself for a year,' said Reginald, 'and he'll start for Pekin or Pernambuco; and before he has been out a day, he'll feel unwell, and order himself to be put in at the nearest port. I'll wager half-a-crown that he never gets a hundred miles from British shores. I'd offer more; but I can't afford it.'

'I am resolved on making a voyage round the world,' said Strange, laughing good-humouredly. — 'Will you come, Gerard?'

'Eh?' said Gerard, waking up, at the sound of his own name, from a dream of the violet eyes.

'You're dull this morning,' cried Val cheerily. 'Wake up, man. I'm going on a voyage round the world. Will you come with me?'

'No; thank you,' said Gerard; 'sailing's dull — duller than I am.'

'Thought you'd jump at the chance,' said Val. 'I know you're a first-rate yachtsman.'

'I got tired of it,' said Gerard in reply, and lapsed into his day-dream.

'You'll get tired of it too,' said Reginald, turning anew upon Strange.

'Don't be too sure of that,' he replied. 'You only know one side of me. There's a good deal of the Spartan in my constitution. I find hardship pleasant. I like a rough-and-tumble life. I should revel in a campaign.'

'You'd pretty soon revel out of it,' said the little man with some disdain. 'Call yourself a Spartan, you Sybarite? Rough-and-tumble? Gammon!'

'Pooh!' said Val, a shade less good-humouredly than before. 'You don't know me, my good fellow.'

'Don't I?' returned the sceptic. 'Who went out of training for the College Eight on the very first day, and was caught by me in the act of smoking whilst brewing cider-cup?'

'Very good cup it was too,' said Val, striving to propitiate his critic.

But the little man arose, and stood over him sternly. 'Who always went headlong for the Newdegate, and wrote twenty lines, and then chucked it? Who came back from his last lounge in Brussels, and —'

'Never mind more instances,' said Strange. 'I admit them all. I don't care to live by line and rule. I don't want to be hampered by

restrictions. As for the training, I never believed in the system. I should have pulled as well after a cigar and a glass of cider-cup, as I could have done without them.' He laughed with renewed good-humour. 'But you must needs come prowling round, like the tyrannical dwarf you are, to see what I was doing. It was you who ordered me out of training, not I who went out of it.'

'I ordered you out of the boat,' said the little man, still standing over him. 'A precious cosun I should have been, if I hadn't.'

'I don't believe in training,' said Strange, with much decision. 'We overdo it, and go stale.'

'You never overdid it,' said his late coxswain severely. 'You are an idler by nature, plus circumstance. You are disgustingly rich, and that fact fosters your natural proneness to self-indulgence. You wallow in gold and purple and fine linen. Your feet are set for ever in the Primrose Way.'

'I like the Primrose Way,' said Strange. 'I am fond of primroses.'

'Many there be,' quoted the coxswain with an unbending air, 'who go the Primrose Way to —'

'Say the workhouse,' pleaded Val languidly. 'I know! Regy, my boy, you're perpetually preaching. You're too energetic and too shamelessly and outspokenly good, for me. Now, look at me. I am athletic by stealth, and blush to find it fame. I cover up my good works. I don't brag of them.'

'You are a lotus-eater and a Sybarite,' said the little man severely. 'And you crown your offences with a crown of aggravation, when you come and crow over a hardy son of the soil like me, and call yourself a Spartan.'

'I am a Spartan,' said Strange lightly. 'I'll do this voyage and something more.'

'Who is going with you?' asked Gerard, waking up again.

'Gilbert. You remember Gilbert at Oriel? First-rate man for the commissariat.'

'Ah,' said Reginald, relighting his cigar, and looking round at Strange with an expression most comically like that of a parrot bent on mischief; 'he's another Sybarite. Wanted to train on truffles and Heidseck's monopoly!'

'Did he?' said Strange, laughing. 'The good old Billy. It was like him. Well, he has the complete control of the commissariat department, and *carte-blanc* to lay in what he likes. He has found a wonderful cook, a sort of nautical Soyer; and he's invented a capital wine-case to swing on — I forget what the things are called; but the wine doesn't get shaken in any sort of weather.'

'It's a very Spartan sort of expedition altogether,' said the critic. 'I hope you've a piano on board!'

'Of course,' said Strange. 'A crate of books. Cards, backgammon, chess, everything in that way we could think of. Because, you see,' he continued with a chastened air, 'there's a good deal of tedium in living aboard a yacht; and since I am rather a man of action than otherwise, I'm likely to find it dull.'

'Poor Spartan!' said Reginald, with a comic crackling laugh.

'There is no form of humour so cheap as the catchword,' said Val sententiously. Then the two laughed together, and Gerard came out of a new day-dream.

'I suppose,' said Gerard, 'you remember that you are engaged to run up to town with me, next week?'

'No. Am I?' asked Val, sitting up with an air of apology. 'So I am. I'm really sorry, Lumby; but I'm afraid I can't keep Gilbert waiting. You'll excuse me, won't you?'

'Certainly, if you wish it,' said Gerard, a little ungraciously.

'I'll write, and put Gilbert off for a week, if you like,' said Val with a penitent look.

'No,' said Gerard heartily, forgetting his momentary pique. 'Don't do anything of the sort, for me. I don't know that I've any special reason for going, after all.'

'It's curious,' said Strange, sinking back into his arm-chair again—'it's very curious that I should have forgotten that engagement. If there's a thing I'm careful to do, it is to remember an engagement.'

At this moment, Hoskins entered with a telegram, which he handed to his master. 'Excuse me,' said Strange; and opening the missive, he laid down his cigar and read it.

'Dear me!' he said, rising. 'Here's poor Gilbert wiring to me to say that we made arrangements to sail yesterday. I thought it was Thursday; and the day turns out to have been Tuesday. I was going down this afternoon to join him.—Well now,' turning upon the gleetful Reginald, who was chuckling at this practical illustration. 'What is there to laugh at?'

'Nothing in the world,' the little man responded. 'Pack up at once; wire to Gilbert; and start by the next train.'

'I'm afraid I must,' said Val, a little ruefully.—'Hoskins! Find out the first train for Bristol.'

'Yes, sir,' said Hoskins, and departed.

'Have you made any arrangements to reduce your establishment, while you sail round the world?' asked Reginald.

'O no,' said Strange. 'The voyage round the world is not an enterprise to be undertaken without experience. We shall make preliminary voyages, and get gradually inured to the work.'

'You can catch a train in an hour and a half from now,' said Reginald. 'Off you go; and we'll ride with you to the station; and then'—bowing solemnly to Gerard—'perhaps Mr Lumby will do me the honour to come and lunch with me at home?'

'Very happy,' said Gerard, rather clumsily. His heart began to beat with some irregularity, and he was conscious of a curious restraint.

Val, having made his moan about the breaking up of a pleasant lounge, and having enlarged on the disagreeableness of railway travelling in the summer-time, went off to superintend his packing; and in due time the three started; Strange lolling in an open carriage, surrounded by sundry portmanteaus, and his companions riding on each side of him. Arrived at the station, the Spartan-minded mariner fortified himself for the journey, which was to last an hour and a half, by the purchase of all the daily and the

comic papers; and parted from his friends in a sudden burst of high spirits and alacrity.

Gerard and his new acquaintance rode away together leisurely. The young fellow was in a singular tumult, and had before this begun to suspect the truth concerning himself. Yet the truth, to a man so little sentimental, seemed absurd and laughable. To have seen a girl for a second or two, and to be thrown into a flutter by it for four-and-twenty hours, and to find the rout of sense and senses growing completer even then, was an experience which would have seemed ridiculously improbable in any man's case to Gerard; and that it should happen to him, made him ashamed of himself. We can read with equanimity of the folly even of sages; but that we should ourselves be vulnerable, though we make no especial claim to wisdom, is startling to discover. This stalwart young Briton had indulged in no flirtations—had never played with the grand passion—had spoken despitefully of it—bragged a little in his secret heart that he was not a lady's man; and believed himself, when he thought about the matter at all, to be cut out for a comfortable bachelorhood.

IS THE INTERIOR OF THE EARTH MOLTEN OR SOLID?

THE question of the condition of the earth's interior, like that of the plurality of worlds, is one which does not submit itself to the process of direct and tangible experiment, hence any knowledge that is to be derived on the subject is mainly inferential. We cannot descend to the central core of the globe, any more than we can ascend to Mars or Jupiter, and are therefore constrained, in dealing with either question, to content ourselves with such outlying phenomena as are within our reach, and to argue from the little that is known to the much that is unknown.

The original condition of the globe, previous to its assuming its present shape and dimensions, cannot be certainly known; but there are indications that it was at the first in a comparatively soft or plastic condition, as is attested by its present shape. A body of this plastic nature, rotating rapidly on its axis, would, in consequence of the centrifugal force caused by the motion of rotation, have a tendency to bulge out at the equator, and to contract itself at the poles, thus losing its strictly spherical form, and becoming orange-shaped. This indeed is the shape which the earth has assumed, and hence may be taken as supporting the theory that its material was originally in a pliable condition.

But while the earth was in this state of plasticity, and gradually assuming its present shape and configuration, a cooling process was at the same time going on, tending to solidify the mass. As we know from analogy, the earth would begin to cool first at its surface—that is, the heat of the exterior parts would be lost by radiation or diffusion into the surrounding medium. The portion so cooled would gradually undergo a hardening process, till in course of time a crust was formed round the whole exterior of the globe. Two questions, therefore,

are suggested in this relation: Did this process of cooling continue till the whole mass of the earth to its very centre was hardened and solidified? or, Did it stop short at a certain distance below the surface, thus forming an inclosing crust around the uncooled molten mass of the interior, like the rind of an orange round its juicy pulp?

Various theories have been from time to time advanced as to the interior condition of the globe, many of them of a purely fanciful character. The great astronomer Kepler, for instance, in seeking to account for the ebb and flow of the ocean-tides, depicted the earth as a living monster, the *earth-animal*, whose whale-like mode of breathing occasioned the rise and fall of the ocean in recurring periods of sleeping and waking, dependent on solar time. He even, in his flights of fancy, attributed to this earth-animal the possession of a soul, having the faculties of memory and imagination. Another great astronomer, Halley, was opposed to the idea of the globe being solid, 'regarding it as more worthy of the Creator that the earth, like a house of several stories, should be inhabited both without and within.' For light, too, in the hollow sphere, he thought provision might in some measure be contrived. So recently, indeed, as within the last hundred and fifty years, equally singular notions have been entertained regarding the earth's interior. Sir John Leslie, like Halley, conceived the nucleus of the world to be a hollow sphere, but thought it filled, not with inhabitants, but with an assumed 'imponderable matter, having an enormous force of expansion.' Other scientists by degrees peopled this hollow sphere with plants and animals—two small subterranean planets, named Pluto and Proserpine, being supposed to shed over this central world their dim and mysterious light. Others supposed that the central air was rendered self-luminous by compression, and hence the two planets were not required. A certain Captain Symmes, who lived in the present century, was strongly convinced of the truth of Leslie's theory. He held that near the North Pole, whence the polar light emanates, was an enormous opening, through which a descent might be made into the hollow sphere, and sent frequent and pressing invitations to A. von Humboldt and Sir Humphry Davy to undertake this subterranean expedition! But these imaginative conceptions must one and all be set aside, and the subject treated on more prosaic though not less interesting lines.

The first question, then, that occurs to one who thinks of the character of the earth's interior, is, What is the weight of the earth—is it comparatively light or comparatively heavy? This question has been answered; and though the answers given, as the results of separate and independent forms of experiment, are not all precisely alike, yet they so closely approximate to each other, that they may be said to constitute among them something like an authoritative reply. The density of the earth is found to be as nearly as possible five and a half times as great as that of water—that is, our globe is equal in weight to five and a half globes of the same size composed of water. But as the average or mean density of the rocks composing the crust of the earth is only

two and a half times greater than that of water, it must follow that the layers of material of which the mass of the earth's unknown interior is composed must be of much greater density than the rocks at the surface. Moreover, that density may be supposed to increase by compression the nearer we approach the centre. Were the internal materials of the same nature as those at the surface, they would at the depth of a few miles be so compressed—supposing such extent of compression possible—as to give a much greater mean density to the whole mass than the ascertained facts will admit of. For instance, it has been calculated that water at the depth of three hundred and sixty-two miles would be as heavy as quicksilver. Now, this metal at the surface of the earth is fourteen times heavier than water; therefore, water at the depth of three hundred and sixty-two miles would be rendered by compression fourteen times more dense than it is in its normal condition. Following the same line of calculation, marble would, at the centre of the earth, be one hundred and nineteen times more dense than it is at the surface. Professor Judd, however, in his recent work on *Volcanoes*, expresses the opinion that the ascribing of such almost unlimited compressibility to solid substances can be supported neither by experiment nor by analogy; as various considerations point to the probability that solid bodies yield to pressure *up to a certain limit and no farther*, and that when this limit is reached an increase in pressure is no longer attended with a reduction in bulk.

It was in view of the difficulties which attended this enormous compression of the ordinary materials found at the earth's surface, that physicists had recourse to the theory that the interior of the globe was a mass of molten matter surrounded by a solid crust. This theory commended itself to Fourier and Humboldt; and after their time, had come to be accepted almost as an ascertained truth. Among other arguments advanced in support of the theory, was the fact, of which there cannot be any doubt, that a high temperature exists in the earth's crust at some depth from the surface. The borings that have been made and the shafts sunk in connection with mining operations, prove that a more or less regular increase of temperature takes place as we penetrate downwards, the average rate of increase being about one degree Fahrenheit for every fifty or sixty feet in depth, although the rate of increase varies very much as between different localities. From the data thus obtained, Professor Judd has calculated that, supposing the heat to go on increasing in the above ratio, there will be found, at a depth of nine thousand feet, a temperature of two hundred and twelve degrees Fahrenheit—sufficient to boil water at the earth's surface; while at a depth of twenty-eight miles the temperature will be high enough to melt cast-iron, and at thirty-four miles to fuse platinum.

'So marked,' says the last-named scientist, 'is this steady increase of temperature as we go downwards, that it has been seriously proposed to make very deep borings in order to obtain supplies of warm water for heating our towns. Arago and Walferdin suggested this method for

warming the Jardin des Plantes at Paris; and now that such important improvements have been devised in carrying borings to enormous depths, the time may not be far distant when we shall draw extensively upon these supplies of subterranean heat. At the present time, the city of Buda-Pesth is extensively supplied with hot water from an underground source. Should our coal supply ever fail, it may be well to remember that we have these inexhaustible supplies of heat everywhere beneath our feet.'

But while the author we have just quoted admits the existence of this increasing temperature within a limited depth from the earth's surface, he yet thinks it would not be safe to infer, as some have done, that at a distance of forty or fifty miles from the surface the materials composing our globe are in a state of actual fusion, as both theory and experiment indicate that under increased pressure a greater degree of heat is required to melt solid bodies. Even water, for instance, in that curious apparatus known by the name of Papin's digester, is retained by high pressure in a liquid condition at a temperature far above the boiling-point, which temperature, but for this pressure, would have entirely converted the liquid into steam; and, should the strong vessel which contains this super-heated liquid be fractured, the water immediately flashes into steam.

But there is still another class of phenomena that bear upon the question of the earth's interior—namely, the phenomena of volcanic action. The study of the materials ejected from volcanic vents proves that even at very moderate depths there exist substances differing greatly in density, as well as in chemical composition. The lightest lavas are more than twice, and the heaviest more than three times, the weight of water. And materials of even greater density have been ejected by volcanic action. In seeking, therefore, to account for the fact that these dense materials were ejected from the earth's interior in a more or less molten condition, a simple explanation was afforded by the supposition that our planet consisted of a fluid central mass inclosed in a solid shell or crust. This shell or crust was, in proportion to the mass of the earth, regarded as but a thin film of hardened material, through which the molten internal matter, from the expansion due to heat, or the disturbances occasioned by local displacements, occasionally forced an opening, pouring itself forth in streams of red-hot lava, and exhibiting all the other manifestations of volcanic action.

But geologists and astronomers have been led, as the result of a more careful and critical examination of the question, to doubt the hypothesis that the earth consists of a great fluid mass surrounded by a comparatively thin shell of solid materials. The general stability of the earth's crust seems to them to be irreconcilable with the supposition that, at no great depth from the surface, the whole mass of the globe is in a liquid condition. And if, as against this objection, it be supposed that the solid crust of the globe is several hundreds of miles in thickness, it is difficult, Professor Judd argues, to understand how the local centres of volcanic activity could be supplied from such deep-seated sources. Then again, if all igneous products were derived from

one central reservoir, we might fairly expect to find a much greater uniformity of character among those products than really exists. In some cases, indeed, materials of a totally different composition are ejected at the same time from closely adjoining volcanic districts. 'Whatever,' he goes on to say, 'may be the cause of volcanic action, it seems clear that it does not originate in a universal mass of liquefied material situated at no great depth from the earth's surface.' It is now very generally admitted, both by astronomers and physicists, that if the earth were not a rigid mass, its behaviour under the attractive influences of the surrounding members of the solar system would be very different from what is found to be the case, and the necessary rigidity would not be obtained were the greater mass of the earth fluid. 'That the earth,' continues Judd, 'is in a solid condition to a great depth from the surface, and possibly quite to the centre, is a conclusion concerning which there can be little doubt.'

Seeing, therefore, that this hypothesis sets aside the central subterranean fluidity from which all volcanic action was supposed to have emanated, an explanation of the phenomena of volcanoes and earthquakes must be sought in directions consistent with this theory of the earth's solidity. It is impossible to give in the space at command more than a brief note of the conclusions that have been arrived at in the attempt to settle this question. The first branch of the hypothesis advanced is, that the increase of heat with the depth does not extend to the whole mass of the earth; that some parts of the earth's interior are of a very different temperature from others; and that there are known to exist such chemical and mechanical agencies as are capable of producing high temperatures within the crust of the globe. The presence of water, and of other liquid and gaseous substances in a state of ever recurring admixture with the fused rock-masses, consequent upon these high temperatures, is believed to be the main cause of the violent displays of energy exhibited at volcanic centres. 'Volcanoes are usually situated near coast-lines, and if we imagine fissures to be produced by which sea-water finds access to masses of incandescent rock-materials, then we can regard volcanic outbursts as resulting from this meeting of water with rock-masses in a highly heated condition.'

There is, as may be expected from this hypothesis of the existence of zones of varying temperature at a moderate depth below the surface, an intimate connection between the phenomena of volcanoes and those of earthquakes. Earthquakes undoubtedly occur occasionally in districts that are not now the scene of volcanic action; 'but it is none the less certain that earthquakes as a rule take place in those areas which are the seats of volcanic action, and that great earthquake shocks precede and accompany volcanic outbursts. Sometimes, too, it has been noticed that the manifestation of activity at a volcanic centre is marked by the sudden decline of the earthquake tremors of the district around, as though a safety-valve had been opened at that part of the earth's surface.'

The powerful vibrations and tremors of the ground beneath our feet, which we call an earthquake, may therefore be nothing more than the

effects of the contact of water, as well as of certain gaseous bodies, with the incandescent rocks which form these strata or bands of high temperature; and the shock which follows may be due to the expanded and antagonistic elements thus brought together forcing for themselves a vent or passage through the less solid and less resisting of the surrounding or superincumbent strata. When the matter thus liberated finds its way to the surface, and discharges itself through the fissure which it has made in the earth, we call that which would otherwise have affected us as an earthquake, a volcano; so that these two remarkable manifestations of power in nature may be said to be twin forces, the product alike of fire and water under compression; the one force operating underground, and making the foundations of the earth to shake and tremble; the other force bursting a way for itself to the surface through the inclosing barriers of rock, and scattering destruction around it.

That this theory of earthquake shocks and volcanic outbursts is consistent with the cognate hypothesis of a solid and not a fluid globe, does not appear to admit of much doubt; and it may even be an element of satisfaction to timid folks to know that they do not, as hitherto supposed, live on what is merely a thin cooled crust over a mass of molten fire, but on a solid body, strong and rigid in all its parts.

A MYSTERIOUS DUEL IN 1770.

FROM AN OLD MANUSCRIPT.

IN TWO PARTS.—PART I.

In the summer of 1770, my father, General—then Colonel—Tolmers Brandon, was commanding an infantry regiment quartered at Portsmouth. During the summer of that year, having obtained a short leave of absence, my father determined to take a trip to the north, to see some of the beautiful scenery of Cumberland, and to my great joy, took me with him as his travelling companion. I was then between ten and eleven; but having been trained entirely under my father's eye, I was rather more advanced and manly, perhaps, than most boys of that age.

After travelling about Cumberland, we came upon a spot so especially beautiful, that the Colonel determined to halt for two or three days, although the only accommodation we could get was at a pretty little quiet inn, close to a village, on the top of a hill, about ten miles from Carlisle. How thoroughly well I remember it! A fine old elm grew on one side, under which was a horse-trough, and close by a tall post bearing the sign of the *King's Head*. His most gracious Majesty George III., though then only thirty-two years of age, was represented as a coarse middle-aged man, with a red bloated face, an enormous Roman nose, and a vast pigtail, and dressed in scarlet regimentals, a huge cocked-hat and plume, with his drawn sword 'sloped' over his right shoulder—in fact, as fierce and savage-looking an 'old' weather-beaten soldier as could be desired. But the simple villagers always considered this to be a very good portrait of their sovereign lord and king.

The high-road passed in front of the inn, and just beyond, turned sharply to the right, where

it entered the village. The little hostelry, though confined for space, was yet beautifully clean, comfortable, and well conducted. It possessed a very fine garden, from which the most enchanting views were obtained of mountain, lake, and valley. Part of it was arranged, and most carefully kept, as a bowling-green. This lay on one side of the house, and ran parallel with the high-road, from which it was only separated by a hedge. The best room was appropriated to my father; and I was accommodated in a small apartment next the kitchen, on the ground-floor, with a window opening upon the bowling-green.

The second night of our sojourn was unusually hot and close. We had retired early, according to my father's wont; but my room was so stuffy that I could not sleep, or even rest; and after tossing about most uncomfortably for a long period, I got up, and putting on a few clothes, threw open the window and stepped out on to the bowling-green. The night was exquisite; the full moon was shining in all her glorious splendour—it was in fact nearly as light as day. After walking about the garden, I returned to the bowling-green, and sat down in a pretty arbour covered with creeping plants. The air was soft and deliciously cool, and everything seemed to induce to calm enjoyment, which was enhanced by the profound stillness that reigned around, broken only by the murmur of a distant waterfall. Whilst thoroughly enjoying this beautiful scene, the village church clock struck one, and I fancied I heard the sound of wheels and horses' feet approaching. In a short time I saw a vehicle come in sight and pass slowly along the high-road; and as my arbour was on the opposite side of the green, I could readily observe, in the bright clear moonlight, that it was a large family coach—such as country squires often drove—drawn by two tall fat horses, and attended by coachman and footman in liveries and cocked-hats. It turned the corner before mentioned, to proceed through the village, as I supposed; not so, however, for it stopped immediately, and I heard the door open and the steps let down, and the sound of feet approaching the inn.

'Belated travellers,' thought I. 'It's little use your trying the *King's Head*, for we certainly can't take you in.'

But this was not the intention of the party. It was not the inn, but the inn garden which they required; for they all stopped at the end of the bowling-green farthest away from the house, where the hedge happened to be very loose and thin. One of the party instantly pushed himself through, and walking a few steps into the green, stood still and looked carefully round. From my having been brought up entirely amongst soldiers, all military uniforms were perfectly familiar to me; and I therefore instantly recognised the huge gold-laced three-cornered cocked-hat, scarlet cloak, jack-boots and spurs, and heavy sword worn by the intruder—who was an immensely tall and broad-chested man—as the uniform of an officer in one of His Majesty's regiments of heavy dragoons. I observed that he was a very handsome man, with aristocratic well-cut features, and seemed to be under thirty years of age.

Having completed his survey, he strode across

the green with that peculiar long swinging stride so common to cavalry-men, and went direct to the open window of my bedroom, and stood motionless for a few moments with his head bent down, apparently listening. Having satisfied himself, he returned to the gap, and said in a loud whisper, and a strong Irish accent: 'Sure, and they're all fast asleep; in with ye.' A second man now pushed through the hedge, dressed exactly like the first—clearly, another cavalry officer—and he was followed by two gentlemen wearing light-coloured coats and cocked-hats richly ornamented with silver, lace ruffles and white silk stockings; and each carried, according to the fashion of the day, light rapiers. Without uttering a single syllable, the whole party came forward, and the two last-mentioned gentlemen at once began to divest themselves of their hats, coats, and waistcoats; both then rolled up the shirt-sleeves of their right arms, and drawing their rapiers, were immediately placed by the two officers, their seconds, in position; and I now comprehended that the object of this untimely visit was evidently to fight a duel. The combatants, after saluting, at once threw themselves on guard, and the fight began in profound silence.

Although I was not yet eleven, I had been instructed and drilled in many military exercises, but more especially in fencing; so I was peculiarly interested in the scene now transpiring before me—the first fencing in real deadly earnest I had ever witnessed; and I was not slow in discovering that both the gentlemen were 'cunning masters of fence,' and thoroughly at home in the handling of their rapiers. The moon was so intensely bright that I could plainly see the faces of both. One was short and slightly built, but marvellously lithe and active. He was exceedingly dark and swarthy in complexion, his heavy thick black eyebrows almost meeting over the nose, contrasting strangely with his white powdered hair; and I somehow felt certain he was a foreigner. The other was taller and stouter, and not so active. He had a round full face, a very fair skin, a clear pink complexion, and was evidently a genuine Englishman.

The fight began by a succession of sharp rapid attacks on the part of the foreigner; which, however, the Englishman parried with consummate skill. For a long time this attack and defence went on, neither party obtaining the smallest advantage, and I rather fancied that the foreigner was getting exhausted, from the ceaseless and amazing activity displayed by him; whilst the Englishman did little else than guard and parry. A thick cloud suddenly obscured the moon, when the dark man exclaimed, in an unmistakable foreign accent: 'Holdt, holdt; ve can-not zee!' These few words, with those of the Irish officer already quoted, were all I heard uttered by any of the party throughout all that terrible time. Even during that fearful pause, whilst the combatants stood calm and still, almost like two statues, not a word was uttered; and when the cloud passed away, and the glorious moon again shed her calm and gentle light on this scene of deadly strife, at a sign from the seconds, the duel began again in profound silence, and was continued precisely as before, without wound or scratch to either party. During the whole of

the fight, the seconds remained near their principals, standing almost motionless, with their arms folded beneath their long red cloaks. At length the foreigner began apparently to lose his temper at being so continually foiled, and was working himself into a violent passion; whilst the Englishman continued to preserve his cool and calm bearing. After some cautious manœuvring, a furious and desperate attack by the foreigner now commenced. The lightning-like rapidity of his thrusts and his wondrous activity of foot, were amazing; but I felt certain he was exhausting his strength. I did not fail to observe, also, the ease and the little exertion with which his attacks were parried. When this had gone on for five or six minutes with but little pause, the foreigner, suddenly advancing a step—apparently to make doubly sure—delivered a tremendous thrust, which must have instantly ended the fight, had not the Englishman very dexterously turned the blade aside, and throwing his whole weight forward in one sudden and powerful lunge, under his adversary's guard, drove his rapier completely through his body, and with such extraordinary force, that two inches or more of the blade came out under his left shoulder. As the Englishman withdrew his sword with a jerk, the foreigner staggered forward a step, threw up his arms, and fell to the ground, dead. At this instant the village church clock struck two. Two o'clock in the morning of the 19th of July 1770, was a moment to be remembered by me to the last hour of my life.

The Englishman, as soon as he had sheathed his sword, cast one steady look at his fallen foe, and then turning, gathered up his clothes under his arm, and at once retreated through the gap in the hedge, followed by one of the officers; whilst the other—the tall one—knelt down by the prostrate form of the foreigner, first, apparently, to make sure that he was dead; and secondly, to search for something seemingly hidden inside the breast of his shirt. At length he pulled out what looked like some papers, tied with ribbon, which he thrust into his pocket, and hastily followed his companions, leaving the dead man just where he fell. Immediately afterwards, I heard the door of the carriage violently shut to; and the vehicle was rapidly driven away—not past the inn, but through the village.

All this time, I must honestly confess I was so deeply interested in what, according to the military teaching of that day, I considered a perfectly fair and honourable proceeding between two gentlemen, that I never, for a moment, thought I had any right or business to interfere or cause interruption by raising an alarm in the little inn. But as soon as the party had retired through the gap in the hedge, I rushed from my hiding-place in the arbour, and knelt down by the fallen duellist, to ascertain if he was really dead. He was lying on his back, with his arms out; and I could see, boy though I was, that he was indeed dead. I therefore ran back to the inn, and at once awoke my father, telling him in a few hasty words what had happened, and begging him to get up instantly. The Colonel, without a moment's delay, threw on his dressing-gown, and descended to the bowling-green; and after carefully examining the body, satisfied himself beyond doubt that the man was really dead.

We then roused the landlord; and ordering lights to be lit in the little coffee-room, which contained a large table, my father directed the hostler to go at once and fetch the nearest medical man and the constable of the village. Then with the assistance of the landlord, he carefully raised the corse, and carried it indoors, to await the arrival of the representatives of surgery and law; whilst I followed with the coat, vest, and hat of the deceased. The medical gentleman soon made his appearance; and after a regular and very careful examination, it was found that the poor fellow had been run completely through the heart, the sword coming out—as I had seen—at his back. The hemorrhage had been excessive, as a matter of course; his clothing was entirely saturated, and a large pool of blood remained in the garden. The deceased was slightly built, but of very good proportions. His face was singularly swarthy, with dark eyes and heavy black eyebrows, that gave altogether a hard and stern appearance to the features. His hair was fashionably dressed, powdered of course, and tied behind in a queue. We came to the conclusion that he was either Spanish or Portuguese, for the few words I had heard him speak clearly showed by his accent that he was not English.

When the constable arrived, my father proposed to search the pockets, to ascertain if possible the name of the deceased. First, a large silk purse was found, containing a considerable sum of money in gold and notes; next, a splendid gold watch, chain, and seals, one of which bore a crest with the initial 'G.' under it; and my father on opening the watch discovered it was French make, and bore the name of the most celebrated Paris manufacturer of that day. In the coat pocket were a gold snuff-box, also bearing the single initial 'G.' in brilliants on the lid within a wreath of myrtles beautifully enamelled; a heavy old-fashioned gold pencil-case; a small gold pounce-box or vinaigrette, beautifully chased; a very fine cambric handkerchief; and a pair of white kid gloves. On each hand he wore a massive ring; that on his right set with diamonds, and the one on his left with rubies. His right hand, when he was lifted from the ground, still grasped an elegant silver-mounted rapier, such as was then usually carried by men of fashion. The weapon, like the watch, bore the name of a Paris maker. His linen was of the finest description, marked, like the snuff-box, with the initial 'G.'; and his lace cravat was secured by a brooch set with brilliants; whilst his knee and shoe-buckles were of elegant chased gold. The coat and breeches were of fine light-blue cloth, richly laced with silver; and his long waistcoat was of embroidered white satin. The large and jaunty cocked-hat was also laced with silver, and bore the name of a Paris hatter. This was all we could discover. Had he possessed a card-case or pocket-book, or papers of any sort, they must have been removed by the tall officer when he took what looked like a packet from the bosom of the dead man, as already related.

At the request of the constable, my father took charge of the valuables and clothing, and ordered that functionary to communicate with the nearest magistrate and the coroner as speedily as possible. So well were these orders carried out, that by eight o'clock in the morning the magistrate arrived. He was a fine genial man about fifty, a Colonel

of militia, an admirable specimen of a thorough English country gentleman. He received my father in the most courtly manner; and this curious incident of the mysterious encounter originated an acquaintance between them which ripened into a lasting lifelong friendship.

(End of Part I.)

THE DIFFERENCE OF A DOT.

DECEMBER and May, in the persons of Mr Josiah Blend and Miss Barbara Paul, were united some half-dozen years ago in the holy bonds of matrimony. People who knew them both were much amazed at the alliance; for the refined and lady-like Miss Paul—had she waited—might have had 'something' younger and handsomer than the venerable, ancient, and many-wrinkled Josiah.

Being a successful Glasgow merchant, the aged Josiah was rich; and naturally their acquaintances concluded that his money was the chief attraction. Perhaps it was. It is not for us to impute motives either good or bad; but there were not lacking prophets enough, even in the small circle of their personal friends, who ventured to foretell a short, sharp, and decisive marriage campaign, in which the young wife would punish the old man, and finally come out of the conflict, under the shelter of a 'judicial separation,' with spoils sufficient to maintain her in a competency for the remainder of her natural life.

They proved false prophets. Whether money was at the bottom of it or not, the pair lived as happily and as lovingly as any two lovers could hope to do. This was so till a certain year, when two different circumstances conspired to bring matters to such a crisis, that the judicial separation seemed inevitable.

Josiah was on the whole an inoffensive old fellow; but when his usually sluggish temper was once quickened into action, he was prone to let it carry him to such an extreme length, that no one could defend him. Barbara was patient to a fault, and tended him with a loving and faithful devotion admirable in one so young. The two unhappy causes which threatened for the time being to end their married life, were very dissimilar in themselves, though in the end they got somewhat mixed up. They were—Barbara's cousin Charlie Robinson, and a telegram.

'Barbara,' said the antique Josiah one morning at the breakfast-table, 'I wish that cousin of yours,—"Dear Charlie," as you call him—would not come here so often and monopolise so much of your time.'

'I do not think he does take up much of my time,' responded his wife, in a mildly surprised tone. 'But I do not see very well how I could prevent him coming, unless I shut the door in his face.'

'You might do worse!' growled Josiah; 'a great deal worse. I hate him, with his pretensions, his stuck-up airs, his general humbug. Why, I heard him call you his "dear Babs" last night, when he wanted you to sing with him!'

'You are not jealous?' laughed Barbara reproachfully; 'surely not. That is the name he called me by when we were children. But I'll tell him you dislike it, and no doubt he'll desist.'

'You would be better to tell him not to come at all, as his company is not wanted. I overheard him say last night to that empty-headed chum of his, that I was an old fossil! Worse still, he said: "That old fogey Blend has a pile of cash; but he is a miserable old skin-flint, and won't part with it." That was gratitude for you, after finishing a couple of bottles of my old Burgundy and smoking half-a-dozen of my finest cigars. He is an impudent scamp.'

'There surely must be some mistake,' urged his wife. 'Charlie would never say that.'

'He did, though,' retorted Josiah angrily; 'I'm quite certain. Better tell him never to come here again.'

'I would rather not, if it please you,' reasonably replied his wife; 'it would be very unnatural for me to do so.'

'You consider it more natural that I should be abused in my own house!' cried Josiah, now at a white-heat. 'Am I to understand you positively refuse to do so?'

'Well, I do not refuse,' replied Barbara, with considerable tact, going over and kissing him affectionately on the cheek—'I do not absolutely refuse; but I most respectfully decline!'

Josiah was forced to smile at his wife's equivocation, and resolved to do the thing himself. He did it neatly too. He wrote to Charlie, saying, that in future it would be esteemed a favour if at any time he intended calling, he would 'send intimation of his intention beforehand, to prevent disappointment.' Charlie took the hint, and did not call again.

A few months after this, Josiah caught a slight cold, and got otherwise out of sorts, so that the doctor ordered him to go down the Clyde, for change of air. It so fell out that Barbara's mother took seriously ill at the same time; and as Barbara was an only daughter, she had to remain at her mother's bedside, and permit her husband to go away alone, of course on the understanding, that when her mother got better, she would at once hasten to her Goodman.

Josiah went to a certain town on the coast which we shall call L—, and engaged rooms with his old friend Mrs Meikle. During the first week, he did not improve, though Mrs Meikle was very attentive. Several letters passed between man and wife, so that Barbara was advised as to his condition, and not a little anxious about him; but her mother was still dangerously ill. Next week, her mother rallied, but Josiah got worse. At last he had a severe bilious attack, and was confined to bed, so that the presence of his wife was imperatively necessary. He instructed Mrs Meikle to telegraph for her; and this was the telegram which was delivered to his wife:

'MRS MEIKLE, L—, To MRS BLEND, Woodburn House, Glasgow.—Your husband is dead. Come down at once.'

Great consternation was the result. On the previous day, Mrs Blend had received a piteous note from Josiah, saying he was 'very ill,' and stating that he had been 'vomiting frequently,' and that his head was 'splitting'; so that she never questioned the accuracy of the telegram. Neither did her father, nor her cousin Charlie, who was sent for in the emergency. She was fearfully shocked at the unexpected intelligence,

and rendered well-nigh helpless; while the two men sagely shook their heads, and attempted to console her with some reflections on the liability of old age to sudden death, which were well meant, but unfortunately ineffective. Charlie undertook—as of course he was expected to do—all the arrangements in connection with the funeral. He went to the cemetery that afternoon, and ordered the grave to be opened in three days; he put the usual notices in the papers; issued the customary black-bordered announcements; went to the undertaker's, and ordered a handsome coffin to be taken down to L—, by the first train in the morning; and indeed, did everything necessary with his usual business-like promptitude and despatch. Then he went to the Telegraph Office, and forwarded this message:

'CHARLES ROBINSON, Woodburn House, Glasgow, To MRS MEIKLE, L—.—Telegram received. Mrs Blend very much grieved. Will be down by first train to-morrow. Do best you can till then.'

Mrs Meikle read the message to Josiah, who smiled sweetly at his wife's loving concern and wifely anxiety. It was very good of her to be 'much grieved,' and to ask Mrs Meikle to do all she could for him. Mrs Meikle noticed his pleased expression, and jocularly observed that he seemed to be getting better even with the thought of her coming down, and had no doubt that a sight of her would do him more good than all the medicine he had taken. In the morning, he felt so well that he got up; but his happy anticipations of his wife's arrival did not last long. Lifting the telegram, which Mrs Meikle had left lying on the table, he read it, and was horrified to discover—that Mrs Meikle had failed to read on the previous evening—that the message was not from his wife, but from the hated Charlie Robinson. The demon of jealousy took possession of his old soul, and dread suspicion set him on the rack of mental torture.

'Charlie Robinson at Woodburn House!' exclaimed he to himself. 'Has he actually been there all the time I have been away? I believe her mother's illness has been merely a blind; and yet the telegram says she is grieved, "very much grieved." Ay, ay, that must be because she has to come away from his delightful society. They will have had a fine time of it, calling one another "Dear Charlie" and "Dear Babs." Well, this is the last straw, and no mistake. I'll make both of them suffer, or my name's not Josiah.'

These and similar thoughts occupied the convalescent merchant fully till the arrival of the train.

That same morning, Mrs Blend and Charlie took their places in the train. Mrs Blend had spent a sleepless night, and had been regretting over and over again that she had not been permitted to see her husband in his last illness. She was dressed in deep mourning; her heart was very sad, and her mind was filled with 'thoughts too deep for words.' Her cousin, the merry and talkative Charlie, had tied a crape band upon his arm, and he too was sympathetically silent. The two undertaker's men and the coffin were also in the train. Charlie thought, and rightly too, that however well adapted the West Coast might be for supplying the necessities of life, a coffin of a suitable size and material was not a thing that

could be obtained there on the shortest notice. That was his reason for taking one down with him, in order to bring the body up to town.

The four persons formed a melancholy procession to the house of Mrs Meikle. Barbara leaned heavily on Charlie's arm, while genuine tears of sorrow chased one another down her blanched cheeks; and the two men followed discreetly at a distance, with the coffin on their shoulders.

Mrs Meikle opened the door, and grasped both of them by the hand warmly, observing that it 'was a fine day;' but neither of them could reciprocate her greeting, and therefore sadly and silently shook hands. Without another word, Mrs Meikle showed them up-stairs, and they summoned all the courage at their command to enter the gloomy chamber of death. Charlie quietly and gently pushed the door open, and ushered in his cousin. She entered, and lifted her eyes to the bed; but it was vacant. Then she looked wildly about the room, and—there was her worthy husband in the flesh and in life, standing at the window in his dressing-gown, grimly looking down on the coffin which the two men had upon their shoulders at the gate below. With a fiercely angry glare he turned upon his wife. Her widow's weeds and the coffin showed there was some monstrously strange thing afoot. He was about to speak, when his wife uttered a piercing scream, and sank fainting to the floor.

The two men, heedless of the fallen Barbara, stared at each other for a moment; Josiah, with mingled hate, contempt, and jealousy; Charlie, with open-mouthed wonder and astonishment. Josiah's busy brain rapidly found a possible explanation. 'They intend,' thought he, 'in my weak and nervous condition, to kill me by the shock of viewing my own coffin, and the preparations they have made for my funeral.' But he felt strong and able to outwit them.

'What is the meaning of all this?' exclaimed the irate Josiah to the thunder-struck Charlie. 'Who is the coffin for? Eh?'

'It's all a mistake'—began Charlie, in a conciliatory tone.

'All a mistake, is it?' roared the infuriated old man, on whom contending passions and tumultuous thoughts were beginning to tell. 'All a mistake, is it?' repeated he, attempting to get within striking distance of Charlie. 'I should rather think it *was* a mistake that I am alive and—and—kicking.'

Charlie dodged round the table, to escape the blow which the fierce Josiah aimed at him with his foot. 'It is a mistake,' cried Charlie once more, across the table. 'The message'—

'Confound you and the message!' yelled the aged one, continuing the chase. 'Nothing would please you better than to see me in my grave. Get out of the room, you confounded whelp!'

Charlie got cool, as Josiah's fury increased. He was struck with the ridiculousness of running and dodging each other round the table; and then, when he thought of the coffin at the door, he could no longer suppress a fit of uncontrollable laughter. 'Hear me a moment,' gasped Charlie—with tears of laughter coursing down his cheeks—'one moment, Mr Blend, and I'll explain. It's really very ludicrous! That coffin down below makes me'—

'You would bury me alive, would you, and

laugh in my face, you vile scamp!' roared Josiah, picking up a carpet footstool and hurling it at Charlie's head, while the latter ducked, as the swirling footstool with projectile force swept the dressing-table clear of its ornaments.

'Out of my sight!' screamed Josiah, now fairly demented.

The young man still hesitated, hoping to explain; but Josiah seized the poker, and would have used it as a projectile, had not Charlie, still convulsed, fled precipitately down-stairs and out at the front door. When he got there, he requested the two men to carry the coffin back to the station; and afterwards adjourned with them to the only hotel in the place, to explain, and laugh immoderately at this most amusing misunderstanding.

Meanwhile, Josiah helped Mrs Meikle to put his unconscious wife to bed. Thereafter, he hurriedly donned his apparel, threw on his overcoat, and rushed off down-stairs.

'Where are you going?' inquired Mrs Meikle, who had sent for a doctor.

'Going? I'm going to my lawyer in Glasgow to get a divorce. I'll not stand tricks like these,' cried Josiah, as he angrily flung himself out and violently slammed the door behind him.

At the station, he got a *Herald*, where he read: 'On the 21st instant, suddenly, at L—, in the sixtieth year of his age, Mr Josiah Blend, much regretted.'

'Much regretted! m'hm,' muttered the old man sneeringly. 'A month or two would have seen the two cousins married. Oh, I see it all, I see it all!'

When he arrived in town, as he was crossing the streets on his way home, he met his old friend Mr Maxton. 'Dear me, is that you, Josiah? You are advertised as dead in to-day's papers.'

'Get out of my way, you old fool!' replied the reckless one, his temper in no degree improved by his journey up to town. So saying, he tore along the street, leaving Mr Maxton gazing after him in speechless amazement.

When he arrived at his house, the servant who opened the door nearly jumped out of her skin with fright; but Josiah pushed past her, and marched into the parlour, where a few male and female friends were assembled, presumably for the purpose of condoling with the widow upon her expected return to Glasgow. They received Josiah at first in silent astonishment; but immediately afterwards with a hearty cheer, which was the first thing to make him think an error had been made, and that there was no intention to kill him with fear. The shaking of hands and the subsequent explanations tended to cool down his wrath; and as the fever of excitement left him, he began to feel his weakness and physical prostration returning, and ultimately was compelled to accept the situation with the best grace possible under the circumstances.

When the telegram was shown to him, he went to the Postmaster to demand an explanation, an apology, and compensation for loss and damage.

'Look here!' said he. 'I was bad with a bilious attack, and got my landlady to send this telegram: "Your husband is *bad*; come down at once." One of your operators made it *dead*, and thereby caused a most frightful misunderstanding. I think you will admit,' said Josiah, with studied severity of

tone, 'there is a very great difference between being bad and being dead?'

'Yes; there is a great difference certainly,' replied the Postmaster pleasantly; 'and I'm glad the mistake is not the other way; for if you had been dead, instead of bad, I would not have been favoured with this visit.'

Josiah had not looked at the error in that light; but not wanting to acknowledge the Postmaster's urbanity too readily, he replied: 'That's all very well; but it does not explain one of the most stupid blunders I ever heard of. The clerk should be horsewhipped!'

'I am exceedingly sorry the mistake has been made; but if you will bear with me a moment, I'll explain. The difference between "bad" and "dead" is not very great in the telegraph alphabet; it is altogether in what is technically called *spacing*. According to the dot and dash system of telegraphy,' continued the Postmaster, who took pencil and paper to illustrate it, 'the word "bad" is thus written and spaced:

b — . . . a . — d — . .

the word "dead:"

d — . . . e . a . — d — . .

being exactly the same number of beats or dots and dashes; and when telegraphed thus:

— — — . . bad,

and

— — — . . dead,

you will observe there is, after all, only the difference of a dot. I am glad, however, that the dot has turned out to be in your favour.'

'I am very much obliged to you,' said Josiah, 'for your lucid explanation. I pray you, however, to call the clerk's attention to the matter. Had I known it might have been an unconscious error, instead of a grossly careless one, I would not have troubled you. Good afternoon!'

With this explanation, Josiah was pacified and pleased. He restored Mrs Blend, on her return from the West Coast, to her former position as queen of his heart; but though he regrets his hasty violence, he has not yet quite conquered his aversion to Charlie Robinson.

POPPING THE QUESTION.

POPPING the question is in many instances a very simple and easy affair. Long intimacy and a tacit understanding have prepared the way and reduced to a minimum the difficulties of the situation. The proposal has been anticipated, and, to all intents and purposes, accepted, long before it is made; and the formal declaration is a source of neither embarrassment and anxiety on the one hand, nor surprise and indecision on the other. Even without these advantageous conditions, some men have no more difficulty about a proposal of marriage than they have about any ordinary business negotiation; just as, on the other hand, there are some who would be overwhelmed with bashfulness and confusion under the most favourable circumstances. At the same time that the former may appear too

matter-of-fact, and the latter conspicuously deficient in manly self-possession, the matter under consideration—whether on account of difference in wealth or degree, or fifty other probable motives of uncertainty—is often one of such delicacy that it would involve, for nineteen out of every twenty suitors, a very considerable amount of hesitation and doubt.

Irresolute swains should, however, bear in mind that 'faint heart never won fair lady;' and their reticence would surely be overcome if they reflected for a moment on Shakspeare's dictum:

That man that hath a tongue, I say, is no man,
If with his tongue he cannot win a woman.

Constitutionally timid men might, if necessary, resort to some such expedient as that of the youth whose bashfulness would not admit of his proposing directly to the object of his affections, but who at length summoned up sufficient courage to lift the young lady's cat and say: 'Pussy, may I have your mistress?' To which the young lady very naturally and cleverly responded: 'Say yes, pussy.' Bashfulness on the part of lovers, and want of courage in connection with popping the momentous question, have formed the subject of many a story. Here is one.

A gentleman had long been paying attention to a young lady whom he was very anxious to marry, but to whom he had never ventured to declare his passion. When opportunity offered, his courage deserted him, and when he was resolved to speak, the fair one never could be found alone or disengaged. Driven to desperation, he one day succeeded in accomplishing his purpose in a somewhat remarkable manner, at a dinner-party. To most people, a dinner-party would hardly seem the most suitable occasion for overtures of this description, especially when, as in this instance, the lady is seated at the opposite side of the table from her admirer. The latter, however, was equal to the occasion. Tearing a leaf from his pocket-book, he wrote on it, under cover of the table: 'Will you be my wife? Write Yes or No at the foot of this.'

Calling a servant, he asked him in a whisper to take the slip—which, of course, was carefully folded and directed—to 'the lady in blue opposite.' The servant did as requested; and the gentleman, in an agony of suspense, watched him give it to the lady, and fixed his eyes, with badly disguised eagerness, to try and judge from her expression how the quaintly made offer was received. He had forgotten one thing—namely, that ladies seldom carry pencils about them at a dinner-party. The beloved one was, however, not to be baffled by so trifling an obstacle. After reading the note calmly, she turned to the servant and said: 'Tell the gentleman, Yes.' They were married in due course.

The difficulty of proposing to the young lady is not always the most serious one the suitor has to encounter. Popping the question to one's prospective mother-in-law, or 'asking papa,' is frequently the more arduous undertaking of the two. When Professor Aytoun was wooing Miss Wilson, daughter of Professor Wilson, the famous 'Christopher North,' he obtained the lady's con-

sent conditionally on that of her father being secured. This Aytoun was much too shy to ask, and he prevailed upon the young lady herself to conduct the necessary negotiations.

'We must deal tenderly with his feelings,' said glorious old Christopher. 'I'll write my reply on a slip of paper, and pin it to the back of your frock.'

'Papa's answer is on the back of my dress,' said Miss Jane as she entered the drawing-room. Turning her round, the delighted Professor read these words: 'With the author's compliments.'

The language in which a proposal ought to be made is a point which has exercised the minds of lovers more than most others connected with their suit. In plays and novels, as a rule the hero asks the heroine to be his wife in flowery and romantic expressions, even if he does not throw himself at her feet and indulge in a wild outburst of impassioned adoration. It is not too much to say that in real life proposals are seldom, if ever, made after this fashion; indeed, any young man who ventured to go through such a performance would be pretty sure to get laughed at for his pains. In Lord Beaconsfield's last novel, an eccentric old nobleman pops the question in the following matter-of-fact language: 'I wonder if anything would ever induce you to marry me?' This was evidently intended as a fresh illustration of Lord Montford's eccentricity; but it is really much nearer the terms in which the average man proposes, than is the average proposal of the novelist. The Americans, we know, carry everything to extremes, and we are told that the New York young men have reduced the formula of the critical proposition to a couple of words—'Let's consolidate.' Nothing, however, could be neater or more ingenious than the proposal of the Irishman, who thus addressed the rustic beauty upon whom he had set his affections: 'Biddy, darlint, they've been tellin' me there's too many of us in the world. Now, if you an' me get the praste to make us two wan, troth an' wouldn't there be wan the less?'

Different customs prevail in different countries in this as in other matters. A curious ceremony, for example, is associated with popping the question among the Samoyedes of Russia. When a young Samoyede desires to marry, and has come to an understanding with the damsel of his choice, he visits her father, and, with a short stick, taps him, and then the mother of the maiden, on the shoulder. He then demands the girl in marriage, and offers the father and mother a glass of vodka which he has brought with him. As a token of his good-will, the father drinks the vodka; he tells the young man he has no objection, but that he must ask the girl's consent. A few days later the young man comes again, this time accompanied by what servants he has, and provided with plenty of vodka. His retinue remain outside while he enters the room and seats himself by the side of his lady-love. The father hands the young man a glass of vodka; he drinks half, and hands the half-full glass, under his left arm, to the girl, who finishes the draught. The father then gives his daughter a glass of vodka, and she in like manner drinks half of it, and presents the remainder, with her left hand under her right arm, to her lover, who drains the

glass. After this, the father hands a piece of raw meat to the young man, who eats it, and then takes a piece from the floor, eats half, and presents the other half, under his left arm, to the girl to finish. She in turn takes a piece of meat from the floor, eats half, and hands the other half, under her right arm, to the young man to finish. This extraordinary ceremonial would appear to complete the transaction, and may be regarded as synonymous with our engagement. The feasting and other ritual necessary to ratify the contract generally take place soon or immediately afterwards.

The most fitting occasion for a proposal of marriage is another point to which lovers attach no little importance, and rightly so, for an inopportune suit would in all probability prove unsuccessful. The great aim should be to hit the tide which in the affairs of love, as in those of men, 'leads on to fortune.' A romantic situation or surroundings have generally been regarded as peculiarly appropriate to the proposition of the all-important question. There is on record at least one instance of a proposal having been made in a balloon while soaring up into the empyrean; and numerous engagements have no doubt been made under equally novel and romantic circumstances. The lover, however, who waits for an occasion of this kind may find himself forestalled by another who has wisely taken advantage of the first favourable opportunity. 'So you would not take me to be twenty?' said a young lady to her partner, while dancing the polka one evening. 'What would you take me for then?' 'For better, for worse,' replied he; and he was accepted. Here is another case in point. Riding home from the hounds after a certain famous county meet, a lady observed to her companion: 'Why should we not marry, Sir John?' 'Ah!' said Sir John, 'that is what I have often thought myself.' And married they were.

The latter anecdote recalls the controversy which has so often been waged as to whether it is competent for a lady to pop the question. Without entering into that question, even so far as the leap-year prerogative is concerned, we shall simply quote an interesting example, the heroine being no other than the wife of M. de Lesseps. This distinguished lady was at La Chesnaye, when all Europe was astir about the achievements of the Suez enterprise. One day, in the garden, she saw De Lesseps walking on a terrace. She plucked a rose, and going up to the widower, begged of him, for her sake, to wear it at dinner. He asked whether she did not mean it for his son. No; it was for himself. De Lesseps explained to her that he was on the wrong side of sixty, while she was not yet nineteen. That did not matter; what his age was had never occurred to her. She had only thought of his greatness and his goodness. In short, he was her *beau idéal*. How was it possible for a man reared on the sunny side of a Pyrenean mountain to reason down the feelings this confession aroused? Time was given to Mademoiselle de Praga to reflect, and she was made to understand that no friendship would be lost were she to change her mind after the banns had been published. The marriage, however, was celebrated contemporaneously with the Suez fêtes.

The Marquis of Lorne conversing recently on Canada as a field for emigration, observed to the present writer that young women who went out to that country would get an offer of marriage about every day. *Apropos* of this remark, we may cite the following brief anecdotes, which graphically illustrate the rapid progress that matrimonial negotiations make in real emigrant life.

'How did you manage to win her affections so quickly, Dan?' asked one settler of another. 'The recipe's worth knowing.'

'Oh, that's simple enough,' replied Dan. 'The first night I arrived at the lodging-house at Auckland, I found myself sitting next to a young woman at supper, who I soon found was one of the newly arrived emigrants. I looked her over, and saw a round, strong, cheery-looking lass, with a laughing face, and thought she'd do. I didn't know how to go foolin' around her to find a soft place, but just spoke a word or two with her, and when we come out into the passage, I gives her a squeeze and a kiss. Says she: "How dare you?" Says I: "I wants to marry you, my dear."—"Marry me!" says she, laughing. "Why, I don't know you." "No more do I you, my dear," says I; "so that makes it all fair and equal."—She didn't know how to put a stopper on that, so she only laughed and said she couldn't think of it. "Not think of it?" says I, artful like; "not when you've come all those thousands of miles for the purpose?"—"What do you mean?" says she, starting. "Come now," says I, "don't tell me. I knows what's what. When a man immigrationises, it's to get work; when a woman immigrationises, it's to get married. You may say so at once."—Well, she wriggled a bit; but we were spliced two days afterwards.'

One day, a widower from New York State appeared in Lansing, Michigan, on 'business. The same business carried him over to De Witt, eight miles away. When *en route*, he stopped at a log farmhouse to warm his cold fingers. He was warmly welcomed by the pioneer and his wife, both of whom were well up in years, and after some general talk, the woman asked: 'Am I right in thinking you are a widower?' 'Yes.'—'Did you come out here to find a wife?' 'Partly.'—'Did anybody tell you of our Susie?' 'No.'—'Well, we've got as bouncing a girl of twenty-two as you ever set eyes on. She's good-looking, healthy, and good-tempered, and I think she'll like your looks.' 'Where is she?'—'Over in the woods here, chopping down a coon-tree. Shall I blow the horn for her?' 'No; if you'll keep an eye on my horse, I'll find her.'—'Well, there's nothing stuck-up or affected about our Susie. She'll say Yes or No as soon as she looks you over. If you want her, don't be afraid to say so.'

The stranger heard the sound of her axe, and followed it. He found her just as the tree was ready to fall. She was a stout, good-looking girl, swinging her axe like a man; and in other two minutes he was saying: 'Susie, I'm a widower from New York State; I'm thirty-nine years old, have one child, own a good farm, and I want a wife. Will you go back home with me?'

She leaned on the axe, and looked at him for

half a minute, and then replied: 'Can't say for certain; just wait till I get these coons off my mind.' She sent the tree crashing to earth; and, with his help, killed five coons, which were stowed away in a hollow.

'Well, what do you say?' he asked, as the last coon stopped kicking. 'I'm yours,' was the reply; 'and by the time you get back from De Witt, I'll have these skins off the coons and tucked up, and be ready for the preacher.'

He returned to the house, told the old folks that he would bring the preacher back with him, and at dusk the twain were married. Hardly an hour had been wasted in courting, yet he took home one of the best girls in the State of Michigan.

Before a man makes a proposal of marriage, he ought to consider well the answer he is likely to receive, as well as how he is prepared to reply to certain queries which may be asked of him in return—such, for example, as that of the young lady who, though

Scarce for emotion could she speak,
Yet did she ask in accents meek,
'How much have you a year?'

In these days of Married Women's Property Bills, when the 'equality of the sexes' is so stoutly contended for in this and other respects, the lady takes a much more active share in the negotiation of such matters than in former days. However secure a woman may seek to make her position in the matrimonial firm, it is not often that she avows at the outset her intention to act as general manager throughout in the direction of affairs. This occurred, however, in the case of a boating friend of ours, who recently asked a pretty but somewhat strong-minded young lady to 'row in the same boat' with him for life. 'On one condition,' she promptly answered; 'and that is—I steer.'

For the benefit of rejected lovers, we shall in conclusion quote the following sage advice, which, with some modification in very exceptional cases, they would do well to follow: 'If a girl once refuses to marry you, don't make a noodle of yourself by hanging around her and persisting in your suit; for if you do cause her to relent, and she becomes your wife, you will never hear the last of your courting pertinacity as long as your wedded life lasts. The safest way, in nineteen cases out of twenty, is to take a girl at her word.'

A GOOD DIGESTION.

THE largest measure of human happiness, it has been truly said, results from a perfect digestion. In the race of life, a sufferer from dyspepsia (indigestion) is not only heavily burdened, but the infirmity of temper begotten by the ailment so overshadows and warps what may naturally be a fine disposition, that he oftentimes becomes a nuisance not only to himself, but also to his friends. A bad or indifferent digestion begets bad or indifferent work, for the simple reason that the sufferer is unable to work up to his own powers. Whether a man be poet or printer, statesman or stationer, he can never hope to make his mark in the world, or live comfortably

and happily, if he fail to properly digest his food.

We trust that the following hints—for which we are indebted to Mr Andrew W. Tuer, Editor of *The Paper and Printing Trades Journal*—supplementary to our paper in a recent issue (No. 927) on the subject of Dyspepsia, may not only be the means of bringing relief to the sufferer, but may rout the enemy altogether. The commonest and most distressing symptoms of indigestion are a sense of weight or oppression in the stomach after partaking of a—generally unenjoyed—meal, often followed by irritability of temper, depression of spirits, and a sense of general discomfort vaguely termed ‘out of sorts.’ An attack may last for days, or for weeks, or be so long continued as to become almost chronic. Medicine may give temporary relief, but that is all. The cause of the mischief, which may be taken to result from a fermentive process communicated to every meal almost as soon as swallowed, must be removed. An antiseptic must be looked for, that, while stopping or killing the ferment, will be harmless to the system; and we find it in glycerine, which was first mentioned in connection with indigestion about eighteen months ago by Doctors Sydney Ringer and William Murrell, in a joint article in *The Lancet*, wherein its use was recommended in cases of flatulence, acidity, and pyrosis. Glycerine is not only an antiseptic or ferment killer agreeable to take, but appears to possess the singular quality of passing through the digestive organs unchanged.

A drachm of glycerine mixed in half a wine-glass full of water is to be swallowed with, or immediately after each meal until the enemy takes to flight, which in an ordinary case will be in from one to two days, and in an obstinate one, perhaps a fortnight. Sooner or later, unless the predisposing causes are removed, another attack will follow, and the glycerine will have to be resumed.

‘Predisposing causes’ having been referred to, it must now be the endeavour to find out what they are, so that a perfect cure may be effected and the glycerine discarded altogether. One’s own common-sense would suggest that food known to disagree should be avoided. Indigestion is often set up at the earliest, and to the dyspeptic, the lightest meal of the day, at which he probably confines himself to crisp toast buttered as soon as cold, bread-and-butter with a very lightly boiled egg, or a little fat bacon, the whole moistened with a little tea. In the word just used, ‘moistened,’ probably lies the ‘predisposing cause.’ The food, when only half chewed, is moistened with a sip of tea to expedite its departure to the stomach; but to insure its digestion, be it ever so simple, the food must be thoroughly masticated and receive during the process the necessary moisture from the saliva. Food should be swallowed without any extraneous aid in a liquid form, and ought never to be washed down. A sip of tea may be taken between the bites, but not when there is food in the mouth, of which a fair quantity ought to be disposed of before the tea is even thought of. The tea itself, by being slowly sipped, receives its share of the saliva, and is rendered more digestible. And this assertion is borne out by the fact, that many

persons who cannot digest milk when gulped or drunk down quickly, readily do so when it is slowly sipped.

The habit of taking one’s breakfast in the manner recommended is so very easily acquired, that, after the first trial, no inconvenience will be felt; in fact, the food will be enjoyed, and the pleasure of the meal greatly increased. Indiscretions committed at the dinner-table are credited as the cause of many dyspeptic attacks; but probably more may be traced to the pernicious habit indicated and indulged in by so many persons at breakfast and tea.

A final hint as to the tea at breakfast. The epicurean method of making it, and that, we believe, practised by professional tea-tasters, is to put a single spoonful—let it be of the best and without any admixture of green—into a breakfast cup, which is filled up with boiling water, covered with a plate or saucer, and allowed to stand for three minutes only, when—after decanting into another cup, so as to dispose of the leaves, which will remain behind—the tea is made. Sugar is added to taste, and lastly milk—and very little, if any, of it. Tea made in this manner is not only most deliciously aromatic, but most digestible; for the bitter tannin, which is apt to harden—literally to tan—the food in the stomach, is left behind.

THE SHADOWED CROSS.

IN wedded love our lives had twined
One year—one careless, golden year—
And then he died, my darling died;
And, for the joy that harboured there,
My heart was filled with dark despair.

I traced the haunts he loved the best
In dear, lost days—alas, so brief!
And Mem’ry’s breathings, once so sweet,
But fanned the furnace of my grief:
They brought no tears to my relief.

At early dawn I sought his grave,
Mid quaint-carved stones, o’ergrown with moss,
And lo! upon the hallowed mound—
In seeming emblem of my loss—
There fell the shadow of a Cross.

And, kneeling there in tearless woe,
Methought I heard my darling say:
‘O love! thy grief a shadow is,
Which, as a dream, shall pass away,
Where shadows melt in cloudless day!’

Then found my anguish vent in tears,
Strange tears of heav’n-born peace, that shed
Around my soul a holy calm:
And when I rose, thus comforted,
The shadow from the grave had fled!

J. W. BROWN.

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